

## REVIEWS

THE DISCOURSES OF NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI. Translated by Leslie J. Walker, S.J., with introduction, chronological tables and notes. (Routledge and Kegan Paul; 2 vols, £5 5s.)

When Father Walker was asked to translate the *Discorsi* for this series of *Rare Masterpieces* he hesitated, because 'it might look', he writes, 'as if I approved all that Machiavelli says in them, including the famous principle that the end justifies the means'. The Jesuits were in fact among the first and fiercest critics of Machiavelli, but he got a bad name with the general public more quickly, it seems, in the Protestant half of Europe; so it was easy for the Protestant imagination to breed a bicephalous monster called, in England, the 'Ignation Matchivell'. The story is told from the anti-Jesuit side by Mario Praz in *Machiavelli in Inghilterra*; and on the same side stood Villari, Burd and even Acton—though Acton curtly denied the fable that the 'famous principle' is to be found in the Jesuit Constitutions. It can add to one's enjoyment of these two splendid volumes to recall those facts.

The *Discorsi* share Vol. I with a lengthy Introduction. Vol. II consists entirely of Notes, Tables and Indices, all in great detail. In all nearly one thousand pages and hardly a wasted word. The notes give masses of historical information, together with copious extracts from Guicciardini, Aristotle and others to supplement Father Walker's own comments. And all this erudition is so well digested and so beautifully arranged as to form a thoroughly practical *instrument de travail*. One can only regret that it costs so much; let us hope that the publishers will soon bring out a cheap edition for the students who are sure to need it.

Though the translation has rightly been made 'as literally as possible', it keeps much of the quick vigour of the original. The translator probably enjoyed his work. In the Introduction his English is perhaps colloquial to a fault sometimes, but for rendering Machiavelli his racy brevity is excellent. It suggests that intellectual sympathy without some degree of which no translator can succeed. Of course Father Walker frequently disagrees with Machiavelli, but he is prepared to agree where he can; which makes all the difference.

There are two main issues raised by Machiavelli: whether public affairs should be governed by the same moral law as governs the individual, and whether religion should be tested by the service that it renders to the State. Not that Machiavelli argues out either matter systematically; he was, as Father Walker remarks, neither a philosopher nor a logician. But it is clear that these questions were of prime im-

portance to him, and that he held downright and very personal, if not very subtle, views as to how they should be answered. The subtlety one associates with Machiavelli belongs to the kind of political behaviour that he recommends, not to his ethical theory. If he had been more of a philosopher he might have been more explicitly anti-Christian; but then he might have shocked the world less than he did, through being less downright. In a sense his principles are less shocking than his frankness; and so Father Walker, who refuses to be shocked more than he need be, is able to draw valuable distinctions within the sometimes rather ambiguous Machiavellian doctrine, for example on the use of deceit in the evasion of treaties and on the meaning of 'virtue'. Thus he allows that 'virtue' for Machiavelli usually connotes devotion to the common good; tyrants, even if successful, are not 'virtuous'. It is true that Machiavelli is not always consistent and that *The Prince* is a manual on the art of getting and keeping power in a bad world; but to say that wickedness is necessary for the achievement of certain ends is not necessarily to say that one approves of these ends or, consequently, of those means. One may be talking about what is, not what ought to be. In fact, Father Walker makes it clear that Machiavelli does uphold the use of bad means even for a good end, and so falls into immoral teaching and not merely teaching *about* immorality. Yet his conception of the *end* of political affairs remains good, if a little hazy: 'he has a very high conception', Father Walker goes so far as to say, 'of what good government means and of the "goodness" which all rulers. . . . should seek to realise'. This conclusion emerges from the *Discorsi*, which thus 'serve, to some extent at least, as an antidote to *The Prince* and make it plain that Machiavelli was a republican who hated tyrants and was anxious to promote the common good'. The trouble was that he thought this could only be done, in certain cases, by evil means. To certain types of evil he was indifferent.

And so the religious issue arises. Machiavelli's writings are obviously pagan in some sense, and his nostalgic approval of pagan religion is not really surprising in view of the passionately political bent of his mind, of his bias towards ruthlessness and his delight in the classics. Yet the violence of his attack on the Church in I, 12 and in II, 5 does take one aback, and it hardly seems enough to say, with Father Walker, that 'his criticism is directed mainly against the political policy of the Popes. . . . and the immorality prevalent in the Court of Rome and amongst the higher ecclesiastics'. That is certainly putting it mildly; not to say a little superficially. The doubt suggests itself whether Father Walker has fully appreciated the force of Machiavelli's strictures on the Church. The matter is important if only because of the great influence of Machiavelli upon Italian anticlericalism down to our own day. In

this connection it is hard to believe that c. XI of *The Prince* implies faith in a special Providence guiding the Church; the tone is surely ironical.

A word of special praise is due to Father Walker's very thorough examination of Machiavelli's logical method and of its claim (which is allowed) to originality. It is the kind of thing one looks for in vain in most writing upon 'literary' texts. But Father Walker has a scientific mind. Elsewhere in the Introduction a few points seem to call for correction or elucidation. One may be mentioned here. The account given of the negotiations between the Congregation of the Index and Machiavelli's descendants does not quite tally with what Villari and Acton said about them (see *The Nineteenth Century*, April, 1892).

KENELM FOSTER, O.P.

ENTHUSIASM. A Chapter in the History of Religion with special reference to the XVII and XVIII Centuries. By R. A. Knox. (Clarendon Press; 30s.)

'Just when the Church', says a character in *Anthony Adverse*, 'is about to be taken for a decorative and snugly-woven cocoon... that cocoon bursts and the beautiful, living psyche of Christianity emerges.' When, on the last page of his huge work, Mgr Knox speaks warmly of enthusiasm, he is there contrasting it to the inertia of the 'cocoon'. He is recalling the mood in which Grosseteste told the Pope 'that the true source of heresy was the corruptness of the clergy.' He is not using 'enthusiasm' in the sense it bears in the title of his book.

The Church has, indeed, been generally successful in directing the enthusiasm that is opposed to inertia, witness St Francis or St John Bosco. Lord Macaulay, in his essay on the Papacy, maintains that, if Wesley or the Countess of Huntingdon had been Catholics, the Church would have retained them within her fold. There is, too, an interesting contrast between Innocent XII's dealings with Fénelon and those of Wesley with the class-leader of Norwich whom he excommunicated on hearsay. The definition which Mgr Knox gives to 'enthusiasm' elsewhere throughout the book is that of 'ultrasupernaturalism', a term under which he brings such widely separated phenomena as Jansenism and Wesleyanism, movements so far spaced in time as those of the Montanists and Irvingites. The religious vagaries of the XVII and XVIII centuries are, however, his chief concern.

Over this wide field Mgr. Knox's scholarship, mordant humour and charity never flag, whether he is speaking of the patroness of the Donatists, the *fou rire* of a nun at Port Royal, Count Zinzendorf reading the riot-act to the Moravian Brethren, or the slimy pietistics of an Agapemone in Somerset. The charm, alertness and objectivity of his